

ANTI-FASCISTS OUTNUMBER
TOMMY ROBINSON & UKIP

Full report >>Page 20 Is party over for Ukip? >>Page 15



Socialist Worker

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ALL THE TORIES MUST



USE BREXIT CRISIS—TAKE THE BATTLE TO THE
STREETS AND WORKPLACES >>PAGE 3

MIDDLE EAST

Pressure could shift Israeli PM to the right

A COMBINATION of imperialism, racism and political manoeuvring could push Israel's government towards launching a fresh wave of violence.

The demolition of tunnels leading into Israel from Lebanon prompted a lot of talk of a possible war with Lebanese resistance group Hizbollah.

>>Page 8

FRANCE

The Yellow Vests have shown the power of protest

FRENCH President Emmanuel Macron's attempt to break and divide the Yellow Vest movement by making small concessions has spectacularly failed.

His fake retreats over taxes have angered the most militant Yellow Vests because the changes are inadequate.

>>Pages 4&5

AUSTERITY

Claimants speak out over universal suffering on UC

MILLIONS OF people face a miserable Christmas because of the Tories' hated Universal Credit (UC) benefit.

Around 1.1 million currently claim UC, many with dependent children.

People at the sharp end of the war on benefits speak out.

>>Pages 10&11



THE THINGS THEY SAY

'100% happening'

Brexit Secretary **Stephen Barclay** at 8am on Monday on the on the Brexit deal vote

'The vote is going ahead'

Michael Gove at 8.30am on Monday

'The vote will go ahead'

Downing Street spokesperson at 11am on Monday

'There will be a statement at 3.30pm'

Downing Street spokesperson at noon on Monday

'The vote will be deferred'

Theresa May in parliament at 3.40pm on Monday

'It's entirely ridiculous'

Lord Foulkes in the House of Lords as it stops debating Brexit as it emerges the Commons vote will be delayed

~_/~

Everybody else

'Useful idiot'

Tweet put out by the **Institute for Statecraft** about **Jeremy Corbyn**. The "charity" received money from the Foreign Office. The Foreign Office funded its Integrity Initiative with £296,500. This financial year, the sum was due to rise to £1,961,000 to combat Russian propaganda



Prison officers get go ahead for a new incapacitating gas

PRISON OFFICERS have been given the go ahead to use a new type of gas on prisoners.

The Pava incapacitant spray, which is notably stronger than CS gas, causes acute pain if sprayed directly into the eyes.

One officer described its effects as "unbearable, like your skin peeling off" after being affected when it was deployed.

Last December a six-month pilot project was launched in four prisons—Hull, Preston, Risley and Wealstun.

It was claimed Pava would be used as a "personal protection aid for officers to use to defend themselves or others against serious attack".

The prison officers got a bit more use out of the gas than that. A report on the trial said

the spray was used 50 times in the pilot jails, including 18 times to stop prisoner-on-staff assaults and 14 times to stop prisoner-on-prisoner assaults.

The remaining 18 incidents comprised eight cases of "passive noncompliance", and "seven of aggressive noncompliance". There were two of "active self-harm" and

one unspecified "incident at height"—all of which were non-violent and outside the stated guidelines.

The report found that levels of violence continued to rise in the four jails where Pava was tested.

Despite those findings, the spray will now be issued to all officers in state-run jails.

● TWENTY-FOUR workers at an Amazon warehouse in New Jersey in the US were taken to hospital after a robot accidentally punctured a can of bear repellent.

The 255g can containing concentrated capsaicin, a compound in chilli peppers, was punctured by an automated machine after it fell off a shelf last Wednesday.

● THEY REALLY do just live for pleasure at the Bow Group, which has announced details of its Christmas knees-up. The Tory think tank's star turn will be a speech by Tory MP **John Redwood** (second prize—two speeches).

The reception and dinner (no Brussels, obviously) costs £65.

For an extra £20, you'll sit next to a "senior" Tory.

Tory John Redwood

● The £10 Christmas bonus for pensioners and some benefit claimants should be worth £128.15 today. Since it was introduced in 1972—when the state pension was £6.75 a week—Scrooge governments have refused to uprate it.

A tenner then bought 62 pints of lager.

Workers in Scotland too poor to buy food

MORE THAN a fifth of people in Scotland have gone a day without eating because they are too poor to buy food, a survey has revealed.

The Citizens Advice Scotland survey of more than 2,600 people found 21 percent had not eaten for a day due to lack of money.

Just under half of respondents were employed and of these, one in three reported having to reduce or skip meals because they lacked money.

A total of 40 percent of working respondents worried about running out of food before having money to buy more and

35 percent said they are struggling to afford to eat balanced meals.

This rose to 45 percent of all those who completed the survey, employed and unemployed.

And 23 percent of people had had skipped meals so that their children could eat.

Rise in food banks

Abusive cop goes to jail over harrassment

A SERVING police officer has been jailed for engaging in an abusive relationship with a vulnerable woman he met on duty.

PC Scott Johnson, from St Mary's Bay sent "inappropriate" texts and images to the woman from his mobile phone for a "protracted period of time".

The 45 year old, attached to the Met Police's Hammersmith

and Fulham borough, was charged with the offence on 30 August, following his arrest on 20 October last year. He was sentenced to two years in jail at Southwark Crown Court last week and has now been suspended from duty. **Socialist Worker** first revealed the case in February.

For more go here bit.ly/2RUXCdu



Are Epipens too short?

ADRENALINE injection devices that were branded "inherently unsafe" by a coroner, have been cited in nine deaths in Britain since 2013 over potential product failures.

The coroner at the inquest of **Natasha Ednan-Laperouse**, the teenager who died after eating a Pret A Manger baguette, suggested the needle of the Epipen was too short.

Overall the Epipens, which are used to treat severe allergic reactions, have been cited in 63 adverse reaction alerts to the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency involving death or serious illness since 2013.

Review for Shrewsbury

THE Shrewsbury pickets have won an important victory in their long struggle to overturn their convictions.

Justice Jay, sitting in the Administrative Court in Birmingham, gave permission for the pickets' application for judicial review to proceed to a full hearing. It is likely to be heard in late Spring 2019. In 1972 following a building strike, 24 workers were tried in Shrewsbury accused of violent crimes.

For details go to bit.ly/2SG40KJ

GOING DOWN



STEPHEN Lawrence murderer **Jamie Acourt** had been jailed for nine years over a drugs plot.

Acourt fled to Spain and was on the run for more than two years before being extradited for his role in the £3 million scam.

The gang based in Eltham, south London, in two years made 34 return trips of 600 miles to ferry cash or drugs. Acourt admitted conspiracy.

Jurors heard Acourt was never convicted over the racist killing of **Stephen** in 1993.

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May's Brexit deal has her government on the ropes

by ALISTAIR FARROW

THE TORIES are on the ropes. Determined resistance could finish them off.

Theresa May postponed a "meaningful vote" on her "final" Brexit deal in the face of a likely rebellion of over 100 Tory MPs.

If the vote had gone ahead, and she had inevitably lost, it was likely Labour would have initiated a vote of no confidence.

Now the government is focused on 21 January as the next stop in the Tories' Brexit cavalcade of chaos. This is the final deadline for a vote on a deal.

After her humiliating retreat from the vote, May flew across Europe desperately seeking concessions from European leaders to stitch onto her deal.

Arrangement

She looked for guarantees that Britain can pull out of the so-called Irish backstop without EU confirmation. The backstop is a temporary customs arrangement which prevents a hard border in Ireland.

But EU president Jean-Claude Juncker poured cold water on that idea. "The deal we have achieved is the best deal possible. It's the only deal possible," he said.

French Europe minister Nathalie Loiseau said the current deal was "the only possible agreement".

May's strategy has been to postpone decisive confrontations. But she could not avoid the reality that MPs from both sides of her party were opposed to her deal.

As one Tory MP put it, "Being in government is about making decisions. But all our options are shit so we keep making shit decision after shit decision, in the hope that it's less shit than the alternative."

The debate is being conducted by



ANGELA MERKEL (right) won't save May

PICTURE: PA



Link Brexit to issues such as the NHS

two rival wings of the ruling class. The need for an alternative is crucial—what's largely missing from the debate is the impact on working class people.

When Labour MP Richard Burgon tried to talk about this on the BBC Newsnight programme he was sneered at by pro-Remain Tory Anna Soubry.

Pro-European figures such as Soubry, or Labour's Chuka Umunna, don't care about the impact of any outcome on ordinary people.

They are perfectly willing to sign away freedom of movement, human rights or anything else in order to protect bosses' interests.

Labour is gradually moving towards a call for a second referendum. Shadow chancellor John McDonnell has said that if May's deal

is voted down a so-called "People's Vote" will be inevitable.

Resistance to the Tory vision of Brexit can't mean supporting a new referendum. It must mean putting forward an alternative vision of Brexit and of society where ordinary people's interests are put before those of the bosses.

Membership of the EU is incompatible with such a vision. We must fight for an anti-racist, anti-austerity Brexit.

That must be coupled with active campaigns on issues such as Universal Credit, the NHS and against racism.

What's your story?

Email with your ideas
reports@socialistworker.co.uk

Terror law used on protesters

A GROUP of 15 protesters found guilty under terror legislation have vowed to keep up the fight against deportations.

The "Stansted 15" protesters tried to block a deportation flight taking off from Stansted Airport in Essex in March 2017.

Melanie Strickland, one of the Stansted 15, told Socialist Worker, "We were charged with an offence that has a maximum sentence of life imprisonment," she said.

"They are coming down harshly on people challenging a contentious government policy," she added.

The Crown Prosecution Service brought charges



On the runway at Stansted

against them under the Aviation and Maritime Security Act.

This was the first time the terror law has been used against political protest.

The jury heard that the Stansted 15 had "placed the safety of the airport in the likelihood of danger".

Melanie hit back against the claims. "The guilt lies with the government and the Home Office," she said. "They put people in danger when they throw them into immigration detention centres and deportation flights."

Melanie said, "Eleven people on that flight are still in the country and some of them now have leave to remain."

"Some of the people on the flight were victims of trafficking, so they were clearly in danger of being re-trafficked, many into sex or domestic servitude."

The Tories want to keep the reality of their racist deportations out of public view. The Windrush scandal earlier this year put the Tories onto the back foot over their "hostile environment".

They hope harsh sentences against the Stansted 15 will help dampen resistance. Anti-racists must show solidarity and keep up the fight against deportations.

Protest at the sentencing, 4 February, Chelmsford Crown Court. bit.ly/Stn15sentencing

Socialist Worker Appeal to raise £125,000

Socialist Worker is the voice of people fighting for a better world. It dispels the racist scapegoating and anti-working class rhetoric of the mainstream press.

We publish stories of the strikes, protests and pickets that can beat back the bosses and bigots. We are asking everyone who enjoys Socialist Worker to donate as much as they can and help fund the resistance.

SUPPORT THE APPEAL BECAUSE...

Socialist Worker is the paper that covers working class struggle.

We have no rich backers or advertising in our pages. We rely on sales and donations from ordinary people.

By donating to the Socialist

Worker Appeal you can help us to continue reporting the stories that matter.

Whether its Israeli apartheid or the Tories' Brexit crisis, we don't shrink from taking on the difficult arguments.

Donate to our appeal today.



To donate go to socialistworker.co.uk/appeal

Call 020 7840 5620 or send a cheque, payable to 'SW Appeal' to PO Box 74955, London E16 9EJ

£125,000

Total so far
£104,113

£75,000

£50,000

£25,000



The Yellow Vests have shown the power of resistance

by CHARLIE KIMBER

FRENCH PRESIDENT Emmanuel Macron's attempt to break and divide the Yellow Vest movement by making small concessions has spectacularly failed.

He went on national television to say he had heard and understood protesters' anger, which he said was "deep and in many ways legitimate".

He added, "I know I have hurt some of you with my words."

Macron went on to announce a little more money for the lowest paid through an increase in a benefit, and tax exemptions for overtime working. That policy was first pushed by right wing president Nicolas Sarkozy a decade ago.

Some pensioners, but far from all, will have a planned tax rise cancelled.

Macron added that he would like, but would not force, employers to pay everyone an end of year bonus.

But he insisted that one of his most controversial measures, a big tax cut for the richest, would go ahead.

Put forward in November, such measures might have looked attractive. But the Yellow Vest movement has moved far beyond tiny demands.

Most Yellow Vests were unimpressed. One prominent figure said, "We don't want a few crumbs, we want the whole baguette."

Confident

Macron's fake retreats anger the most militant Yellow Vests because they are inadequate. They simultaneously encourage the less confident who notice that struggle gets results.

"Act V" of the Yellow Vests' rebellion was due to take place on 15 December. It follows four weeks of revolt on the streets, in schools, universities and, increasingly, workplaces.

The strikes are crucial, and the call for unity of struggles and a general strike has grown.

The movement has inspired resistance in other countries such as Belgium and the Netherlands.

Protesters in Iraq have been inspired to wear yellow vests on

BACK STORY

The Yellow Vest movement began in November as a protest against rising fuel costs

●Thousands of protests blocked roads, and were met with police repression

●The movement is named after the high-visibility jackets people are required to keep in their cars

●It has grown and developed into major confrontations and battles with police across France

●It has also forced President Macron to make concessions

their own demonstrations. And in Egypt the regime of dictator Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has restricted the sale of yellow vests ahead of the anniversary of the 2011 Egyptian Revolution.

Repression has not broken the movement.

On 8 December the state mobilised 90,000 police across France to prevent protests. In Paris there were 8,000 police with 180,000 tear gas grenades and backed by 12 armoured cars.

Eventually there were over 1,200 arrests nationwide and scores of people wounded.

But it didn't stop the furious protests, not just in Paris but in Marseille, Dijon, Bordeaux, Lille, Nantes, Strasbourg, Nice, Caen, St Etienne, Toulouse and Montpellier.

Young people in particular have been inspired by the Yellow Vests—and the repression of their protests has underlined the violence of the state.

Having failed to defeat the movement with sham concessions, Macron may turn to more violence—and racism.

In his television address he ominously called for something to be done about French people's identity, about immigration and about so-called threats to secularism.

But united and more militant struggle can defeat all of Macron's scheming and push for fundamental change.

DEMONSTRATORS IN Marseille. The writing says 'Macron, give the money back to the people'

This revolt of the forgotten can win if protests spread to strikes

DANIEL COHN-BENDIT, one of the student leaders in the mass revolt of May 1968, claimed that "the large majority of the Yellow Vest movement comes from the National Front, from the reservoir of the extreme right".

This slur is easily refuted by anyone who has looked at the demands coming from large parts of the movement.

There are many different versions.

But the most unifying ones are for a big increase in taxation on the rich, more money for the services ordinary people need, the removal of Macron and an end to privatisation.

A Yellow Vest collective in Commercy, in north eastern France, put out a video calling "for the formation of popular assemblies across France".

It said protesters want "a new order in which those who are nothing, and are spoken of with contempt, take back power from all those who stuff themselves, from the rulers and the powers of money." Not all Yellow Vests

think like this. There is a battle between left and right.

But the general trend is towards the left, towards unity with strikers and the young people who are taking to the streets in growing numbers.

The most effective form of action to deepen the revolt is to spread it, and more workers striking to halt production and services.

The effect would have been devastating for the government if it had gone ahead.

Macron cannot withstand extended mass strikes that link the street protests and the movements by young people.

The CGT union has called Friday 14 December as a national day of action including a rail strike and strikes in significant other parts of the public sector.

All such actions are welcome. Millions of rank and file workers in the unions either are themselves Yellow Vests or support those who are fighting back.

But many union leaders are coming over very reluctantly to add extra forces to the struggle.

They are trying to run to the front of it in order to control it.

They will settle for small gains when much bigger ones—both economic and political—are possible.

At my school we are part of the protests over the new system that will make it harder for people to go to university and will hit students from outside France. But we are also fed up with

the way things are.

The politicians are for the rich and for the corporations, the ones that take our future and burn the planet.

I'm fed up with reading about '68.

I want to be like that but better, we want a revolution."

Elisabeth, school student, Paris

A student protest

Higher taxes on the poor will not save the planet

BIG MARCHES against catastrophic climate change also took place in Paris on Saturday 8 December and in many other cities across France.

The government has tried to camouflage its tax increases on fuel by saying that they are needed to curb harmful emissions.

This led to a Yellow Vest activist to respond that Macron "talks about the end of the world while we are talking about getting through to the end of the month".

But the government's attempts to caricature the Yellow Vests as ignorant and selfish about climate change have collapsed.

Some Yellow Vests joined the climate demonstrations.

Benoit came from a roadblock on the Tourville-la-Riviere roundabout in Normandy to be part of the one in Paris.

"We are here for the

climate and against the excesses of the capitalist system. We are all Yellow Vests," he said.

One prominent banner read, "End of the month, end of the world, same people guilty, same struggle."

Several marchers had Yellow Vests daubed with the slogan, "Make the rich pay for the ecological transition."

In Lille some marchers wore half-yellow, half-green jackets. Vital

ecological changes can't be rammed through by making working class people poorer and without their involvement and agreement.

The unity of the Yellow Vests and the climate activists is a very important step forward.

After the end of the climate march, activists who had attended both were chanting for Macron to resign—they were attacked by police.

'We are determined now'

"I HAVE never seen anything like it in France.

I have been going on student and then trade union demonstrations for 35 years.

But I have never seen the scale of fury against the authorities as we had in Toulouse on 8 December.

It began peacefully with thousands of people on Yellow Vest and ecological demonstrations which came together.

Then police started acting very heavy, firing tear gas and people weren't having

it. We are confident and determined now, we don't take shit.

Protesters put up huge barricades and the police could not advance for over an hour. They were pelted with paving stones, materials from a construction site and bottles and jars from a glass recycling bin.

A metro station was set on fire.

There were dozens of arrests but it doesn't hold people back.

This has been coming for a long time. The week before there were school strikes

in Toulouse that were attacked by police.

Earlier this year in a poor part of the city there were riots over the death of a man in prison and racist attitudes by police towards Muslim women.

It's not a revolt about fuel tax anymore, if it ever was just about that.

It's become a place where everyone can put forward their anger and their demands. Mostly it's very progressive, very united."

Sophie, Toulouse

'Politicians are for the rich'

"WE LOVE the Yellow Vests, we admire them for going for the cops and for refusing to follow orders.

At my school we are part of the protests over the new system that will make it harder for people to go to university and will hit students from outside France. But we are also fed up with

A student protest

Socialist Worker
WHAT WE THINK

OUR UNITED FRONT CAN BEAT NAZI ROBINSON

THE ANTI-RACIST and anti-fascist unity last Sunday was the best display of what it will take to stop the Nazis.

For the first time, those mobilised behind the Nazi Tommy Robinson in his attempt to build a new racist street movement were heavily outnumbered.

It's not the end of the fight, and Robinson could well mobilise many more in the future. But our side felt powerful and confident.

If we build on the success of last Sunday we'll get to the point where we can run the Nazis off the streets altogether.

Many forces were involved in mobilising support for the anti-fascist demonstration. They included the left wing Labour group Momentum.

Momentum and its supporters did a lot of work online. They produced videos exposing Robinson, set up Facebook event pages and sent out emails to the tens of thousands of people on their email list.

There was even a text in the name of shadow chancellor John McDonnell asking people to join the demonstration.

There was a Momentum

banner, held by some well-known Momentum faces. But it was one banner among many—a small part of a much larger show of force.

Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) was a dominant presence on the march. That shouldn't be surprising.

Over the past few years SUTR activists have put in the work to build a mass anti-racist movement.

When the racist right reappeared on the streets last year in the form of the Football Lads Alliance, SUTR was the first to oppose them.

A lot has changed since then. In November some 30,000 people joined a SUTR demonstration against the rise of the far right.

With the direct involvement

of its activists, SUTR can mobilise people when they're needed most.

Among them are Labour Party members, Socialist Workers Party members, Green Party members, representatives of Muslim, Jewish and other faith groups, and people with no affiliation.

So it was noticeable that throughout the demonstration groups of people marched behind SUTR banners from all parts of Britain. SUTR groups from outside London had put on coaches to join the protest.

And in the run-up to the march SUTR activists put in the long hours needed to leaflet and poster for the march.

They held organising meetings. They contacted trade union branches, faith organisations and Labour Party branches.

The demonstration would have turned out very differently if none of that had happened.

The truth is it takes more than a large email list and a sophisticated web presence to build a mass anti-racist movement.

There needs to be a dedicated united front that's focused on putting as many people as possible on the streets to smash the Nazis.

Worker went to press on Tuesday 11 December.

The news of Interserve's financial woes will mean a fraught Christmas for its 45,000 workers in thousands of contracts with local authorities throughout Britain.

But the financial reliability of the company hasn't stopped it being awarded lucrative public sector deals.

Just three days after its share price fell by 53 percent it was given a £25 million contract to

redevelop a hospital in Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales.

Interserve's crisis follows the collapse of Carillion in January this year.

That put thousands of jobs at risk, and cost £148 million of public money according to the National Audit Office.

Privatisation is a scam. It guts services and wages in "good" times, then destroys them when it goes wrong. Vital public services shouldn't be left to the whims of the market.

Holiday greetings to our readers

● The next issue of Socialist Worker is due out on Wednesday 2 January 2018

● Until then check our website for reports and updates

● Send news and reports to reports@socialistworker.co.uk

socialistworker.co.uk



ANALYSIS

TOMÁŠ TENGY-EVANS



Liberals can't solve a ruling class crisis

PUNDITS RIGHTLY mock Theresa May's promise to deliver "strong and stable" leadership amid the Brexit chaos. Yet she's not the only European ruler facing a crisis. Germany and France are far from "strong and stable".

Germany's Tory chancellor (prime minister) Angela Merkel effectively stepped down at the beginning of December. And French president Emmanuel Macron is running to make concession after concession to the Yellow Vest movement.

While the crises facing May, Macron and Merkel all have their specific triggers, they are not discrete.

The European ruling classes' response to the global capitalist crash of 2007-8 was austerity. Conservative and Labour-type leaders all accepted the neoliberal prescriptions—slash public spending, open up services to more privatisation and hold down workers' wages.

By squeezing workers, they hoped to restore profitability and make us pay for the bank bailouts. But despite widespread pain for workers, austerity has failed to solve the crisis—global growth remaining sluggish ten years after the crash.

And the liberal "centre" ground is facing a serious challenge. In many parts of the world people are in revolt against those at the top of society.

This sort of anger at the 1 percent can cohere around socialist politics as we've seen with the advance of Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour Party in Britain.

Often, it's much more contradictory.

So the Brexit vote was partly a vote by poor people to kick the establishment, not simply characterised by racism towards migrants.

Yet both the official Remain and Leave campaigns scapegoated EU migrants, which encouraged a right wing atmosphere in society. And the left—including the once Eurosceptic Corbyn—lined up behind the neoliberal EU as the only alternative to the right.

It is still unclear where the anger and bitterness that led to Brexit will go—so how the left responds is crucial.

Rewind

The majority response from liberals is to rewind to before 2016—when David Cameron and George Osborne were in charge. And unfortunately some left wingers have fallen for the fallacy that the only way to stop the far right is to prop up the liberal "centre".

This was characterised by a Guardian newspaper article in defence of its former poster boy Macron. John Henley wrote that the Yellow Vest revolt "represents a formidable challenge to the authority of the centrist president".

Then he declared that "not just France but Europe should hope" that Macron's concessions "will prove sufficient to quell the destabilising anti-government protests".

The Yellow Vest movement in France—which could spell the end for Macron—involves people with a mix of contradictory ideas.

The far right understands that politics is in crisis and that they can gain from this.

Matteo Salvini, Italy's racist interior minister, tweeted, "The left behind, the thousands of honest people massacred by the French government, are now on the street."

Far right fanatic Steve Bannon—who is trying to coordinate Europe's far right—also saw the potential in Macron's crisis.

"The Yellow Vests are exactly the sort of people who elected Donald Trump and voted for Brexit," he said.

Henley's prescriptions would boost the growth of the far right and racists.

There was massive pressure on the French far left to uncritically line up behind Macron in the presidential run-off against fascist Marine Le Pen. That would have put it in a much weaker position to try and shape the Yellow Vest movement, which Le Pen has tried to champion.

Similarly, Corbyn lining up behind the big business-led campaign to remain in the EU would be a gift to the far right.

The liberal centre is not a bulwark against the far right—it is the enemy of the left and working class people.

The left should put the case for socialist transformation. That means fighting the liberal centre, not lining up behind it.



PICKET LINE at the Regis Road depot in London last week

PICTURE: SOCIALIST WORKER

Camden traffic wardens in solid strikes for higher pay

TRAFFIC WARDENS in Camden, central London, are striking for two weeks as part of their fight against low pay.

The 120 Unison union members, who work for outsourcing giant NSL in the north London borough, came out last Thursday.

Chants of, "Low pay, no way," rang out on the over 50-strong picket line outside the Regis Road depot.

Tom, a Unison member, told Socialist Worker, "We need to fight it to the end, we can't give in on it."

"If we don't strike now, we won't ever get anything."

Workers are fighting to increase their pay to £11.15 an hour.

David, a Unison member, told Socialist Worker, "People feel very strongly about it and that's why the turnout on the picket line is impressive."

Deal

NSL pays workers £10.20 an hour under a three-year pay deal agreed in 2015-16.

A round of strikes in 2015 forced bosses to agree to pay workers above the London Living Wage, which stood at £9.75 an hour.

The London Living Wage has increased to £10.20 an hour, but NSL is refusing to pay up.

David explained how spiralling living costs are pushing many workers into

poverty. "Housing, energy, food and transport costs have all gone up, but our pay isn't keeping up with inflation," he said.

Tom said that people are working long periods of overtime just to make ends meet.

"You need to imagine the stress from always having to work overtime," he said. "You can't live on the basic pay."

"In London, it's next to impossible."

Workers have been angered at claims by bosses and



Unison leader Dave Prentis

Labour-run Camden council that they can't afford to give workers a pay rise.

David said, "The council took £26 million in profit and NSL made £2 million profit last year."

"They say that the money is ring-fenced for other council services, but what about us who do the job?"

Profit

"We bring in the money, but we don't see a share of the profit."

Tom added, "That's what's so annoying. Every day you can see what people bring in, but we don't see it in our wages."

The battle is pulling in traffic wardens who didn't strike during the first round of action in October.

Jack, a first-time striker, said, "I've worked here seven years and witnessed three strikes."

Negotiations should be the best way, but after the strike in October management came back with an offer that was worse than first one."

Some 80 people joined a demonstration last Saturday in support of the strike in north London.

The Unison national leadership should call more action to pile the pressure on the bosses.

Workers' names have been changed. To send solidarity messages email unison@camden.gov.uk

Care workers fight on

HOME CARE workers in Birmingham have overwhelmingly backed more strikes in their fight against job cuts and privatisation.

The 120 Unison union members have been fighting the Labour-run council's package of redundancies and cuts since January.

They have voted to strike by 97 percent on a turnout of 73 percent. It is an overwhelming mandate

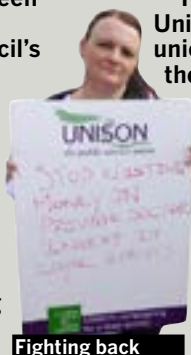
for Unison to call further strikes.

Overall, it is a better result than both of their previous ballots and shows workers' determination to fight.

The Tories' Trade Union Act requires unions to reballoon their members every six months.

Every trade unionist should build solidarity for the care workers' crucial fight.

Donate to the strike fund at bit.ly/BrumStrikeFund



Fighting back

Refugees face cold, hunger and attacks from the cops in Calais

Hundreds of people are trapped at Britain's border with France in Calais. Many have fled the West's wars and now face renewed repression from the state, reports **Tomáš Tengely-Evans**

FRENCH POLICE have launched a renewed wave of repression against refugees trapped at Britain's border in Calais.

Around 1,500 refugees are scattered across a number of makeshift settlements in northern France. Many have tried to use the French police's preoccupation with the Yellow Vest protests to make it across the channel to Britain.

But police have responded with brutal violence.

Muhammed, a 13 year old Iraqi Kurd, has been in Calais for two and a half months.

His parents and three sisters—the youngest just three years old—have endured near daily harassment from the cops.

"The police come every two days," he told Socialist Worker. "They come in the morning shouting, 'Wake up, wake up, wake up'."

"One morning about a week ago the police came and shot at one of the people."

Blnd, a 17 year old from Iraqi Kurdistan, has an impairment that affects his legs.

"The police threw me onto the floor to take my fingerprints," he told Socialist Worker. "It's always like that with the police."

"Sometimes they come and spray gas on us."

The police brutality comes amid worsening weather conditions in Calais. Raber, a 17 year old refugee from Iraqi Kurdistan, said, "We were here a few days ago without our tents and shoes in the mud."

"My brother is disabled and is in a chair. I managed to get him into a social centre, but he has to leave on Monday and we don't know what will happen to him after that."

Settlements

The settlements aren't official refugee camps, which means the cops have free rein to try and break them up on a regular basis.

Muhammed, a refugee from Iran, told Socialist Worker, "The police come and they break our tents."

"All of our stuff, the food, the tents—they took it all away. Afterwards we didn't have anything to make a fire with."

Another refugee from Iraqi Kurdistan, told Socialist Worker, "Often the police come and they hit you, they cut you."

He added, "The problem is that France and Britain divided our country into five parts. We're between Iran, Syria, Iraq and don't have any rights."

Many of the refugees in Calais have fled the West's wars in the Middle East, dictatorship,



MUHAMMED (second from right) and his family in Calais have suffered harassment from the police, who have also attacked refugees with tear gas (left) PICTURES: SOCIALIST WORKER

EUROPEAN UNION

Racist policies force retreat from charity

THE MEDECINS Sans Frontieres (MSF) charity has been forced to stop search and rescue operations of refugees in the Mediterranean.

MSF said, "This is the result of a sustained campaign spearheaded by the Italian government and backed by other European states."

Nahum, a teenage refugee from Eritrea, has been living in in Calais for eight months after making the deadly journey across the Mediterranean.

MSF's forced retreat means more refugees like Nahum could die. "It's really difficult to cross," Nahum told Socialist Worker. "The sea waves are very big and such a big problem."

Far right and racist governments in Italy, Hungary and Austria want to reimpose internal borders within the European Union (EU).

But the EU's so-called "centrist" rulers want to reinforce Fortress Europe's external borders.

If refugees manage to get through the racist EU's borders, they are trapped at Britain's border in Calais.

Hostile

And even those who make it into Britain then face the full force of the Tories' "hostile environment".

Hafiz fled Afghanistan in the wake of the chaos unleashed by the Western occupation and the Taliban. He had been in Calais for ten days.

"Before that I was in England for four years," he told Socialist Worker.

"I lived in Sheffield."

The Home Office refused his asylum case and were trying to deport him.

"The Home Office harassment was really bad for my mental health," he said.

"I had to leave, but I want to come back to where I have friends and family."

Hafiz came to Calais in the hope of being able to make it back into Britain.

Anti-racists have to fight against the EU and Britain's racist borders and to end the "hostile environment".

Solidarity delegation visits

OVER 90 trade unionists, students and others were part of a solidarity delegation organised by Stand Up To Racism and Care4Calais last weekend.

The biggest delegation came from Haringey and Enfield in north London.

It included Labour councillors and activists, students, trade unionists and members of the Socialist Workers Party.

They brought much needed supplies.

The solidarity delegations are about more than charity.

Dave, a GMB union member from the union's North West and Irish Region, told Socialist Worker, "I came through seeing the plight of the refugees in the news."

"It's to show some solidarity."

He added, "Part of the reason is to report back what we've seen against the negative press about refugees."

Help the Care4Calais winter appeal at bit.ly/Coats4Calais

On other pages...
Anti-fascists outnumber Tommy Robinson demo >>Page 20



Pressure on Netanyahu could move him to right

He has not been murderous enough for those in the Israeli ruling class who want war, writes Nick Clark

A COMBINATION of imperialism, racism and political manoeuvring could push Israel's government towards launching a fresh wave of violence in the Middle East.

The recent demolition of tunnels leading into Israel from Lebanon prompted a lot of talk of a possible war between Israel and Lebanese resistance group Hizbollah.

The Israeli government has repeatedly threatened war against Hizbollah in recent months.

Yet there has been speculation that the timing of the demolitions could also be designed to rescue Israeli prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu from a political crisis.

He is under attack from the right for apparently being soft on Palestinian resistance group Hamas, and now his government hangs by a thread.

It's an indictment of Israeli politics. After nine months of continual murderous violence against Palestinians in Gaza, one of its most right wing prime ministers so far could fall for not being violent enough.

Israeli forces have killed more than 200 Palestinians since weekly protests at the border fence between Israel and the Gaza Strip began in March 2018.

Demand

It's all because they demand not only the end of the 11-year long siege of Gaza but also the right of return for Palestinian refugees.

Right wing news website the Times of Israel now routinely refers to this demand as an open call "for Israel's destruction".

That's because Israel—as a state founded on maintaining a Jewish ethnic majority over Arabs—views the presence of Palestinians as a threat to its existence.

Over the last year Israel has deepened its occupation of Palestinian



Binyamin Netanyahu

FIGURE IT OUT

A recent poll by the Israel Democracy Institute revealed the extent of racism in Israeli society

90 percent of respondents said they would be disturbed to some degree if their daughter were to befriend an Arab boy

50 percent of those polled agreed with the phrase "most Jews are better than most non-Jews because they were born Jews"

land in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The government has stepped up its building of Israeli settlements through which it seizes Palestinian land.

It was encouraged by the decision of US president Donald Trump to recognise Palestinian city Jerusalem as Israel's capital at the end of 2017.

Yet Israel faces a problem—what to do with the Palestinian population under occupation, which could threaten Israel's Jewish majority.

In the face of this, support in Israel for parties that call for the expulsion of Palestinians has grown.

Now Netanyahu faces challenges from politicians to his right who want a new war in Gaza, and to annexe Palestinians territories.

At the same time Israel has pushed for any call for Palestinian rights, criticism of Israeli policies or suggestions that it is a racist state, to be seen as antisemitic.

A single state in all of Palestine, with equal democratic rights for all its citizens, is the only way of securing justice for Palestinians, and peace in Palestine.

The alternative is violence, racism and war.

DIGGERS TARGET tunnels along the Israel-Lebanon border

ALBANIA

Rama drama ding dong as fees hike brings a massive palaver to Tirana

STUDENT PROTESTS over a proposed university tuition fee rise have rocked the Albanian government.

Thousands of people took to the streets in the capital Tirana and towns and cities across the Balkan country last week. The For the University Movement is demanding that the government cancels the latest fee hike and halves graduate course fees.

Edi Rama, Labour-type Socialist Party prime minister, tried to mock student protesters as "grade-failers".

This only fuelled students' anger. As one protester said, "I am a grade-failer because I have to work 12 hours a day to pay for the tuition fees and books."

The movement has already pushed Rama's government into retreat over some parts of funding. And, encouragingly, the student protesters have rejected support from the right wing opposition parties.

Rama came to office at the head of a coalition of social democratic parties in 2013 promising change. Dubbed the "Albanian Renaissance" it promised much-needed change from the Tory-like Democratic Party.

But the Albanian Socialist Party has sacrificed people's aspirations on the altar of European Union

(EU) membership. Rama's government had to prove it was capable of pushing through free market reforms in order to begin accession talks.

Zealot

Rama drafted in New Labour privatisation zealot Tony Blair to advise the Albanian government on European integration.

The focus was on "public order"—beefing up police numbers, clamping down on drugs cartels and rooting out judicial corruption.

In practice, the government's answer to corruption was free market policies.

One of the centrepieces of Albania's "reform package" has been changes to higher education, modelled on the British university system. The student protests show

the possibility of confronting the legacy of nationalism, war and free market shock therapy in the Balkans. Some protesters have made comparisons to the mass protests that toppled Albania's Stalinist dictatorship in 1990.

Hopes for change were betrayed right across the former Stalinist bloc.

In the Balkans the outcome turned more violent as various former Communist and "democratic" politicians stoked up nationalism to secure their power base.

They were backed by different imperialist powers.

The Albanian protests show the possibility of an internationalist alternative to the local ruling classes' nationalism and the EU's neoliberalism.

Tomáš Tengely-Evans

Students and their supporters shut down Tirana

Johnson is example of sick system

CHURCHILL-wannabee Boris Johnson has been ordered to apologise to parliament for failing to register nine payments totalling £52,722.80 within a 28-day deadline.

This sum amounts to 70 percent of Johnson's salary as an MP.

Some £22,916.66 of the figure is Johnson's monthly fee for writing four articles for the Daily Telegraph—a task which supposedly takes up ten hours of his valuable time.

The House of Commons committee on standards found Johnson's failure to register his extra payments was "neither inadvertent nor minor".

Johnson has form on salaries paid for extracurricular activities.

In 2009 he found time in his busy schedule as Mayor of London to hold down a second job as a columnist with the Daily Telegraph.

When criticised, he argued it was "wholly reasonable" because "I happen to write extremely fast".

He dismissed the £250,000-a-year he received for his musings as "chicken feed".

Johnson's chastisement comes a day after the Tory benches hooted in derision at Jeremy Corbyn when he attacked the government for the misery that Universal Credit is creating.

The Tories laugh at the poor and consider £250,000 "chicken feed".

In the words of Johnson's hero Churchill, "Some chicken. Some neck."

Sasha Simic
East London



Leeds refugee case shows that campaigning can work

WE HAVE been foster carers for a young refugee, Hossein Ahmadi, who arrived in Britain on the back of a freezer truck in the summer of 2016. He had spent ten months in the misery of the Dunkirk camp.

In October this year, Hossein received his 20-page letter of rejection from the Home Office.

We contacted his teachers to ask them to write letters of support to help his appeal.

One of his teachers started a petition which got to thousands of signatures within days.

They used an article that the NEU union magazine had printed about Hossein's story to help spread the word.

The college marketing

department was also on the case, producing a short film about Hossein.

A week before the appeal date over 60 teenagers and their teachers marched around Leeds City Centre, handing out Stand up to Racism flyers and chanting "Hossein Must Stay".

The local press started covering the story very sympathetically.

On the day of the hearing, apart from his close supporters, two coaches full of students and staff arrived. They had diverted their trip to see a Panto.

The G4S security said they had seen protests outside this court, but never this big.

The Appeal Court judge upheld

the appeal. He took the unusual step of announcing the result at the end of the hearing.

We believe the reason was because of the magnificent campaign that staff and students at Leeds City College ran.

We want to thank every Socialist Worker reader who signed the petition or sent a message of support to us during the #HosseinMustStay campaign.

Staff and students at the college are now talking about doing more refugee solidarity work. They said this has never just been about Hossein but others who have the same journey and battles.

Sally Kincaid and Steve Johnston
Leeds

We are fighting cuts to mental health services

OUR CAMPAIGN has been fighting for six years to stop severe cuts to mental health services in Norfolk.

We are sick of constant talk about mental illnesses by MPs and celebrities, and still no real funding.

Last month we held a public meeting in Cromer, a small seaside town which in the last year has suffered the loss of many young people through suicide.

Over 100 people turned up. While capitalism survives it is hard to imagine a society without

mental distress. Similarly it's hard to imagine a helpful mental health service.

We've had enough of chief executives whose aim is just to impose more cuts.

Congratulations to striking care workers in Birmingham.

Perhaps if mental health workers in Norfolk had taken action, we would not have lost so many to imposed redundancy and many patients would have been saved from suicide.

Terry Skyrme
Norfolk

Let's spoil our ballots in a 'people's vote'

SOCIALISTS CAN only confront the EU on class grounds. This means anti-austerity, renationalisation and open borders.

We can have nothing to do with Article 50, which is part of the corrupt European Union (EU).

We want to confront the EU on those class grounds, and defy them to attack us—what might be called "Lexit by means of expulsion."

Today Leave has been swallowed up by an alliance of ultra free-marketeers and



imperialist nostalgics. In a "people's vote" none of the options will be acceptable. Any non-Leave option will be tailored to the needs of business. Any of them will tie a Corbyn government to the EU's

competition rules. Even worse, the parliamentary leaderships of the "people's vote" and "Norway+" are promising curbs on free movement either through existing rules or the "Emergency Brake". This will be a fatal concession to racists. Our only effective option is opposing the entire process, preferably by spoiling the ballots.

These must be counted and show the extent of opposition to the whole rotten show.

Barry Pavier
Bradford

Just a thought...

Unions should fight over pay

HOW LONG are the unions going to sit back and let our pay go down?

Workers' pay is worth less now in real terms than it was when the Tories got in.

In the north of England it's fallen by £21 a week since 2008.

If unions called more action, we could get some of it back.

Gill Deane
Liverpool

A rebellion against more?

IS Extinction Rebellion solely a climate change movement as the media are framing it?

Because the current extinction event is as much about habitat loss, water overuse and pollution, agriculture and over-fishing as it is about climate change.

@GaryCushway
On Twitter

Trump golf costs a joke

TRUMP CAN'T afford Medicare for all, but he can waste £65 million on golf (£65,000,000 for Trump to play golf watched by cops, Socialist Worker, 5 December)?

Mark Wardell
On Facebook

Borrowing to afford food

A REPORT last week said a third of families with disabled children had to borrow money to buy food in the last year.

It's unbelievable. People with disabled children or family members have extra costs. They may find it harder to work because of their caring responsibilities.

But instead of giving support, the Tories are just making life harder.

Janet Sadler
South Yorkshire

Mainstream media biased

MANY GREAT links from socialists on Twitter.

Channel 4 News often shows unprofessional bias against Labour.

The BBC doesn't even pretend to provide balanced, unbiased coverage of events anymore.

Tony Lowe
On Twitter

UNIVERSAL SUFFERING

PEOPLE AT THE SHARP END OF THE TORIES' WAR ON BENEFITS SPEAK OUT

BY
SADIE ROBINSON

MILLIONS OF people face a miserable Christmas because of the Tories' hated Universal Credit (UC) benefit. Around 1.1 million currently claim UC, many with dependent children.

Emma is one of them. "None of us can afford Christmas," she told Socialist Worker. "I've had to put a plea out to friends to send my little boy something, even a card, otherwise Santa won't visit."

"The pressure is on because his friends at school are saying what they are getting. He made a Lego Christmas tree and decorated it because he doesn't know if we'll get one."

"He's five years old and he deserves better."

A further 116,000 children face severe poverty at Christmas as new UC claims go in, according to the Peabody Trust housing association. New claimants have

to wait five weeks for their first UC payment—so won't get any money until the New Year.

And for claimants who are getting paid, it's a struggle to survive.

Chloe has been on UC for around two years. "Over Christmas it's even more difficult to get by," she told Socialist Worker.

"You are in the house more and it's very cold, so you use more gas and electric. Even if you don't spend a lot on Christmas presents it's still difficult as it's an extra expense."

"If you struggle in general, it's a lot worse at this time of year."

The Tories say UC simplifies the benefits system by combining six benefits into one payment. They say UC "makes work pay". It's rubbish.

Chloe said, "I found a job while I was on UC. They sanctioned me for missing a meeting because I was at work. They knew I was working—they had my hours and they got my payslips before I did."

UC has nothing to do with helping ordinary people. It's a mechanism for punishing the poor.

PAULA PETERS is a Disabled People Against Cuts and Unite Community activist. She told Socialist Worker, "My partner has likened UC to the plague. It is causing horrendous destitution, poverty and homelessness—and the Tories are the rats spreading it."

Paula and other activists have been campaigning against UC outside jobcentres. "We've heard horrendous stories," she said. "People are being thrown off the benefits system completely, denied support, sanctioned."

"They're being left with nothing for months. People are relying on friends and family, pawning everything they have, going to loan sharks."

Charlotte Hughes has been campaigning against UC for about five years. She's from Ashton-Under-Lyne in Greater Manchester, one of the first areas to pilot UC in 2013.

"My daughter was sent to a workfare interview when she was 20 weeks pregnant," Charlotte told Socialist Worker. "She'd told the interviewer she was pregnant, and because of that the jobcentre said they were sanctioning her for three years."

That's what set us off. A group of us decided we would stand outside the jobcentre every week to campaign and support people."

Charlotte said her daughter's experience was just the tip of the iceberg. "Everybody we spoke to had been sanctioned," she said. "The DWP were just doing whatever they wanted. Even though they deny it, everyone knows they have targets to adhere to."

"We've heard of suicides, attempted suicides, women and children going really hungry. Some people don't realise you can be hungry and freezing cold even though you have a home."

The targets mean claimants are pushed to look for jobs or to up their hours, even when they aren't well. Chloe said, "I suffer from anxiety and depression, plus I have physical health problems that mean I can't stand for long."

"I also have epilepsy. I can't always leave the house on my own because I might have a seizure and black out. They said I have to search for work—but I can't work." UC is currently

being rolled out across Britain. People who claim any of the six so-called "legacy" benefits it replaces, such as housing benefit or child tax credit, are being moved onto it. Eventually all new claimants will have to apply for UC.

Emma ended up on UC after she was forced to flee a violent relationship and move to a new area. "I didn't think anyone could make me feel like a victim again," she said. "However, the way I'm being treated is almost on the same level."

The Tories dismissed warnings about extreme hardship this Christmas, saying claimants can apply for loans to ease the transition onto UC.

"There's no reason for people to be without money over Christmas because advance payments are widely available," said a Department

for Work and Pensions (DWP) spokesperson.

This assumes that dealing with the DWP is simple and straightforward. Yet many people find it impossible to get through to the UC helpline, or don't have internet access to progress their claims.

TIME AFTER time, claimants describe making requests in their online journals, only to be ignored. And if claimants do get an advance, it's later taken out of their UC payments—at up to 40 percent of the benefit.

Chloe said, "I had to apply for two advance payments when I went onto UC because I just had no money. But then you have to repay it. It leaves you short every month. At one point I was left with £7 for the month after paying for gas, electric and food."

Some 113,000 UC payments were late last year, according to the

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) spokesperson.

Chloe said, "I had to apply for two advance payments when I went onto UC because I just had no money. But then you have to repay it. It leaves you short every month. At one point I was left with £7 for the month after paying for gas, electric and food."

Paula Peters

National Audit Office. Even when the system "works" it plunges people into poverty and despair.

Charlotte said that, in her years of campaigning outside the jobcentre, she has noticed a "sharp increase" in sanctions in the run-up to Christmas.

"They do it to the most vulnerable people, people they think don't know how to fight back," she explained. "At Christmas time, what are you going to do? There's nowhere open to get support. People can't get through to the DWP. It's the worst time of year to do it."

Lack of money leaves claimants reliant on charity, especially if they don't have family or friends to fall back on.

"Somebody has set up a free Facebook donations page for gifts and they are raffling prizes to help people," said Emma. "A support worker is trying to get us a food hamper. But the demand is so high this year I'm not sure it's happening."

Charlotte said there's a danger that food banks are being "normalised".

"Sainsbury's has signs on the shelves saying this or that would be good for food banks," she said.

"Food banks have become a need people pacifying the system. We need to campaign against the system that is creating the poverty."

Paula said the Tories are using UC for their own ends. "This is an ideological, political choice to abolish the welfare state," she said. Charlotte said the aim is to "punish the poor".

"It's what the Tories do," she added. "They think we're a burden on society, they think we're worthless. They think disabled people don't have any financial value. They look down on us."

The Tories have been forced to retreat partially as the disaster of UC continues. As more people move onto it, the crisis will grow.

A Public Accounts Committee report in October warned that the number of claimants per work coach "is set to increase fourfold".

Pete, a jobcentre worker, told Socialist Worker that there is "horrific understaffing" in jobcentres. He said UC is "causing havoc".

But he added, "The real problem isn't understaffing, it's that UC is designed to punish claimants. At the recent TUC congress, our PCS

Scrap this rotten system

UNIVERSAL CREDIT has been condemned by claimants, charities, MPs, jobcentre workers and even the United Nations (UN). UN Special Rapporteur Philip Alston condemned the policy for driving more people into poverty in a report last month.

More claimants are due to be moved onto UC in the middle of next year.

But MPs have warned that getting this "managed migration" wrong could "plunge claimants into poverty and even leave them destitute".

A Public Accounts Committee report published in October said UC is "causing unacceptable hardship".

Food bank use has soared by over 50 percent in areas where UC has been in place for at least a year.

The Tories, desperate to keep the policy going, threw a bit more money at it in November's budget. But the Resolution Foundation think tank said some three million "working families" will still lose out.

A BBC Panorama programme that month found that council tenants on UC have on average more than double the rent arrears of housing benefit claimants.

Across 129 councils, the average arrears for UC claimants was £662.56. For housing benefit claimants it was £262.50. UC was originally supposed to be fully operational by October 2017.

That deadline has now been pushed back to December 2023.

union delegates voted for a motion to scrap UC."

As the horror of UC unfolds, there's real potential to force the Tories to scrap it. UC claimant and blogger Alex Tiffin has called for a "welfare rebellion" along the lines of the Extinction Rebellion climate protests.

He says we need "UK wide civil disobedience" to draw attention to the horrors of UC and to fight to get rid of it.

We should call on the unions and Labour to up their game too.

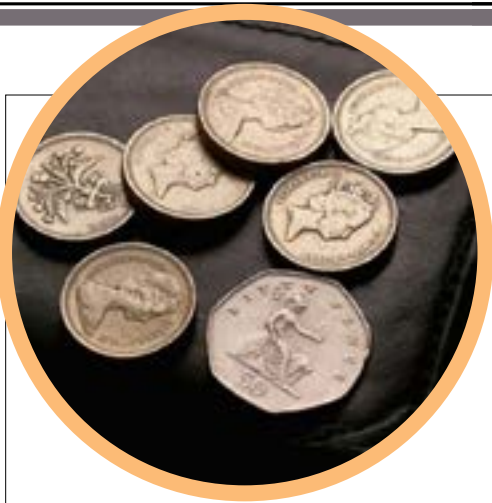
"Labour wants a year's study and then it will decide what to do about it," said Charlotte. "John McDonnell agrees UC should be scrapped, but it's not the official policy."

"I'm a Labour Party member and I think it should be scrapped. It would be a vote-winner. But they don't seem to see that."

She added, "Unite Community do some things, but they're not doing as much as they could be. People need to realise how much people are suffering."

In the meantime, claimants will suffer stress, hunger, cold and despair as images of joyful Christmases are rammed down our throats.

"For many, Christmas is cancelled," said Emma. "I'm just reiterating the importance of love, not presents. It's horrible and it needs to change."



699,000 – the number of public sector jobs the Tories are still planning to cut
50 – percentage of new jobs in the first quarter of 2010 that "underemployed" people who wanted more hours



“The Tories dismissed warnings about extreme hardship this Christmas

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602 for more information

SOCIALIST WORKER PUBLIC MEETINGS



What can we do in 2019 to crush the Nazis?

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

Socialists, anti-racism and resistance in 2019

BIRMINGHAM

Wed 9 Jan, 7pm,
Birmingham LGBT Centre,
38/40 Holloway
Circus, B1 1EQ

BRIGHTON & HOVE

Thu 10 Jan, 7.30pm,
Friends Meeting House,
Ship St, BN1 1AF

BRISTOL

Wed 9 Jan, 7.30pm,
YHA, 14 Narrow Quay,
BS1 4QA

BURNLEY AND PENDLE

Wed 9 Jan, 7.30pm,
Red Triangle Cafe,
160 St James's St,
BB11 1NR

CARDIFF

Wed 9 Jan, 7.30pm,
Cathays Community Centre,
Cathays Terrace, CF24 4HX

CHESTERFIELD

Thu 10 Jan, 7.30pm,
Chesterfield Library,
New Beetwell St, S40 1QN

COVENTRY

Wed 9 Jan, 7.30pm,
West Indian Centre,
159 Spon St,
CV1 3BB

DERBY

Thu 10 Jan, 7pm,
West End Community Centre,
Mackworth Rd (next to
Britannia Mill), DE22 3BL

DUNDEE

Wed 9 Jan, 7.30pm,
Dundee Voluntary Action,
10 Constitution Rd,
DD1 1LL

EDINBURGH

Wed 9 Jan, 7.30pm,
Friends Meeting House,
7 Victoria St,
EH1 2JL

HARLOW

Thur 10 Jan, 7.30pm,
Friends Meeting House,
1 Church Leys, CM18 6BX

KENT

Thu 10 Jan, 7.30pm,
Nucleus Arts Centre
(Conference Room),
272 High St, ME4 4BP

LANCASTER AND MORECAMBE

Thu 10 Jan, 7pm,
Friends Meeting House,
Meeting House Ln,
LA1 1TX

LEEDS: CITY CENTRE

Thu 10 Jan, 7pm,
The Swarthmore
Education Centre,
2-7 Woodhouse Sq,
LS3 1AD

LIVERPOOL

Wed 16 Jan, 7pm,
Friends Meeting House,
22 School Ln, L1 3BT

LONDON: HACKNEY

Thu 10 Jan, 7.30pm,
The Round Chapel,
2 Powerscroft Rd (corner
Lower Clapton Rd),
E5 0PU

LONDON: HARINGEY

Wed 9 Jan, 7.30pm,
St John Vianney Church Hall,
386 West Green Rd
(corner Vincent Rd),
N15 3QH

LONDON: NEWHAM

Wed 9 Jan, 7pm,
Stratford Advice Arcade,
107-109 The Grove (next
to Morrisons car park),
E15 1HP

LONDON: SOUTH

Wed 9 Jan, 7pm,
Vida Walsh Centre,
2b Saltoun Rd (near Effra Rd,
facing Windrush Sq),
Brixton, SW2 1EP

LONDON: SOUTH EAST

Wed 9 Jan, 7pm,
Deptford Lounge,
9 Giffin St, SE8 4RH

LONDON: TOWER HAMLETS

Wed 9 Jan, 7pm,
Epainos Church,
Lichfield Rd, E3 5AT

LONDON: WALTHAM FOREST

Wed 9 Jan, 7.30pm,
William Morris
Community Centre,
6-8 Greenleaf Rd,
Walthamstow, E17 6QQ

LONDON: WEST & NORTH WEST

Thu 10 Jan, 7.30pm,
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78 White City Cl,
Shepherd's Bush, W12 7DZ

MANCHESTER: CENTRAL

Wed 9 Jan, 7pm,
Friends Meeting House,
6 Mount St, M2 5NS

NEWCASTLE

Thu 10 Jan, 7pm,
Commercial Union House,
39 Pilgrim St, NE1 6QE

PLYMOUTH

Thu 10 Jan, 7pm,
Quaker House,
74 Mutley Plain,
PL4 6LF

PORTSMOUTH

Wed 16 Jan, 7.30pm,
Somerstown
Community Centre,
River's St,
PO5 4EZ

SHEFFIELD: CITY CENTRE

Thu 10 Jan, 7pm,
Central United
Reformed Church,
60 Norfolk St
(near Crucible Theatre),
S1 2JB

SWANSEA

Wed 9 Jan, 7.30pm,
Brynmill Community Centre,
St Albans Rd,
SA2 0BP

YORK AND SCARBOROUGH

Wed 9 Jan, 7.30pm,
Sea Horse Hotel,
4 Fawcett St,
YO10 4AH

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{ SOCIALIST WORKER } BRANCH MEETINGS

Weekly meetings to discuss political issues and our local interventions. All welcome.

ABERDEEN

Germany 1918— from war to revolution

Mon 17 Dec, 6pm,
The Snug,
Ma Cameron's,
6-8 Little Belmont St,
AB10 1JG

BARNSELEY

How was Israel created?

Thu 3 Jan, 7pm,
Room 302— The Civic,
Hanson St,
S70 2HZ

BRADFORD

Greenham to Grangemouth— peace camps to picketing

Thu 20 Dec, 7pm,
Glyde House,
Little Horton Lane (opposite the ice rink), BD5 0BQ

GLASGOW

The German Revolution and Rosa Luxemburg

Wed 9 Jan, 7pm,
Avant Garde, 33-44 King St,
Merchant City, G1 5QT

LONDON: ISLINGTON

Saudi horror in Yemen—a crime made in Britain?

Wed 9 Jan, 7pm,
The Old Fire Station,
84 Mayton St, N7 6QT

HOLIDAY GREETINGS TO PRISONERS

AS THE holiday season approaches, Socialist Worker asks readers to write to prisoners and those who have suffered at the hands of the state.

When you write please enclose a stamped addressed envelope so they can reply if they wish to.

Brendan McConville

Roe 4 C7604
HMP Maghaberry
Old Road
Upper Ballinderry,
Lisburn
BT28 2PT

John Paul Wootton

HMP Maghaberry
Old Road
Upper Ballinderry,
Lisburn,
BT28 2PT

For more information on the Craigavon Two go to is.gd/PozCMk

Ross MacPherson

A6791AD
HMP Belmarsh
Western Way
Thamesmead
London
SE28 0EB

For more information go to is.gd/c2OZZA

Kevan Thakrar

A4907AE
HMP Whitemoor
Long Hill Road
March
PE15 0PR

For more information go to justiceforkevan.org

John Bowden

A5026DM
HMP Warren Hill
Grove Road
Hollisley
Woodbridge
IP12 3BF

For more information go to is.gd/8vdNcT

Naweed Ali

A0531CJ
HMP Frankland
Brasside
Durham, DH1 5YD

Khobaib Hussain

A0537CJ
HMP Long Lartin
South Littleton
Evesham, WR11 8TZ

Mohibur Rahman

A3480AZ
HMP Full Sutton
Stamford Bridge
YO4 1PS

Tahir Aziz

A8301DV
HMP Whitemoor
Long Hill Road
March, PE15 0PR

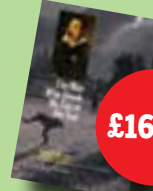
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IT WAS a massacre that set the tone for a decade of siege and violence. The Israeli state's first all-out war on Hamas in Gaza—launched ten years ago this month—ended with some 1,400 Palestinians killed, overwhelmingly civilians.

The enclave's infrastructure was left in ruins.

Yet Palestinian resistance acted as an inspiration.

It fed into a burgeoning revolt against a dictator in Egypt. It saw giant demonstrations in Britain, and the growth of a mass international movement in solidarity with Palestinians.

The assault on the Gaza Strip—a tiny, overcrowded piece of land hemmed in on all sides—began on 27 December 2008 and lasted just over three weeks.

It was a war of terror on ordinary Palestinians.

One activist from Gaza, Muhammad Shehada—then 14 years old—later wrote, “The constant fear I first felt in those days has become chronic.

“Sleep is hard—nightmares and memories prey on my mind. Loved ones are always exposed to danger.”

Telling his story for the Electronic Intifada website, he described being trapped in Gaza—and the sick irony of Israeli leaflet-drops warning people to evacuate.

“We were just fish in a barrel at which the Israelis shot without restraint,” he wrote.

“We hugged every night as if for the last time, before we struggled to steal an hour of sleep.

“Above us, the sky lit up what seemed like every other second with airstrikes and artillery fire.”

Other Palestinians have told of how Israeli soldiers—after invading their neighbourhoods—shot civilians or held people at gunpoint.

Israeli soldiers have since spoken of how they systematically destroyed houses as they occupied neighbourhoods.

The most horrific part of this assault was surely the use of white phosphorus on densely populated areas.

Impossible

When burst in the air, white phosphorous bombs send burning wedges of the chemical flying over a wide area. And if any comes into contact with human skin, it can burn to the bone.

Its use is forbidden in populated areas under international law. Particles are almost impossible to remove.

Yet in the aftermath the Human Rights Watch reported, “The unlawful use of white phosphorus was neither incidental nor accidental.

“It was repeated over time and in different locations, with



GAZANS FLEE white phosphorous during Operation Cast Lead

CAST LEAD—MURDER IN PALESTINE

Ten years ago Israel launched an assault on the Gaza Strip. It left 1,400 people dead and left Gazans with a broken infrastructure that makes life a misery, writes Nick Clark



Muhammad Shehada

the IDF ‘air-bursting’ the munition in populated areas up to the last days of its military operation.”

“Air-bursting” is intended to maximise the spread of the chemical.

There was widespread bombing of civilian areas too—some of it by deliberate, precision strikes.

By the end of the war Israel had destroyed some 3,500 homes—making more than 20,000 people homeless.



We were fish in a barrel which the Israelis shot without restraint

Hospitals and United Nations (UN) schools where Palestinians had taken shelter were shelled too.

John Ging, then Gaza director of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, said 700 people had taken shelter in its main compound when Israel shelled it.

What’s more—Israel knew it. At the time UN workers had been in real-time communication with Israeli forces.

Eighteen schools were

destroyed in the assault, along with more than 300 factories, miles of water pipes, reservoirs and wells.

Some £7 million worth of damage was done to Gaza’s electricity infrastructure.

It was all part of a deliberate strategy. In the months ahead of the invasion, the chief of the Israeli army Gadi Eisenkot outlined his “Dahiya Doctrine”.

Named after a Beirut neighbourhood which bore the brunt of Israel’s invasion of Lebanon in 2006, the idea was to target what Israel called Hamas’s “supporting civilian infrastructure”.

In the midst of the war Eli Yishai, then Israeli deputy prime minister, put it plainly.

“It should be possible to destroy Gaza so they understand not to mess with us,” he said.

Palestinian buildings were to be “razed to the ground so thousands of houses, tunnels and industries will be demolished.

“The operation will continue until a total destruction of Hamas.”

Yet for all the horror it unleashed on Gaza, Israel failed to do that.

GAZA HAD been under siege for more than a year when Israel’s assault began. A year earlier resistance group Hamas saw off an attempt to overthrow it—backed up by Israel, the US, Britain and Egypt—by Palestinian faction Fatah.

Now Israel wanted to destroy Hamas completely. It was all about restoring a Palestinian government ready to go along with the occupation.

Hamas had won the elections to the Palestinian government—the Palestinian Legislative Council—in 2006 after a campaign of determined resistance.

Unlike Fatah and the Palestinian Authority (PA) it had boycotted the Oslo “peace process” that began in 1993.

The Oslo deal was presented as a path towards an independent Palestinian state. In reality it cemented the Israeli occupation.

Israel kept control of the borders of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, along with swathes of land inside the Palestinian territories.

It extended the occupation with new settlements and checkpoints while the newly-formed PA policed Palestinian resistance.

In contrast Hamas was associated with the Second Intifada—an uprising against the occupation that began in 2000.

And it was credited with forcing Israel to withdraw its settlements from

Gaza in 2005.

So when Hamas stood for election in 2006 it won by a landslide.

Israel and its Western backers the US and Britain, who rely on it to prop up their control of the Middle East, couldn’t accept the result.

They claimed they couldn’t deal with a government that wouldn’t accept Israel’s right to exist or give up violence. .

It was total hypocrisy. In more than a decade of supposed peace talks, Israel had never given up violence against the Palestinians or recognised any of their rights.

But in any case Hamas had effectively accepted Israel’s right to exist.

It called for a ceasefire based on Israel’s withdrawal from East Jerusalem, Gaza and the West Bank.

In practice this concedes Israel’s “right” to the land it seized from Palestinians through a process of ethnic cleansing in 1948.

Israel’s real problem with Hamas was that it wouldn’t drop its resistance until that was achieved.

And Hamas wouldn’t give up its demand for the right of Palestinian refugees to return to the land they were expelled from in 1948.

This is something that Israel, as a state founded on racism against Arabs, can’t tolerate.

Undermine

It claims the return of Palestinians to their homes would undermine its existence as a Jewish state.

So the US and Israel demanded that Fatah, which still controlled the presidency and PA security forces, launch a coup.

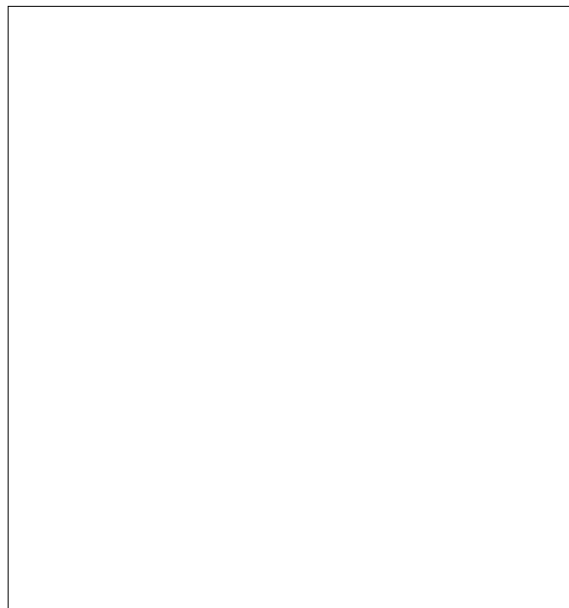
In 2008 journalist David Rose exposed a US plan to provoke a Palestinian civil war between Fatah and Hamas. This involved funding and training Fatah militias via Arab states.

There were growing clashes between Hamas and Fatah forces.

When 500 Fatah fighters marched into Gaza from Egypt in 2007, Hamas took action. By the end of the fighting Hamas had seen off the attempt to overthrow it.

But it was isolated in the Gaza Strip while the PA controlled the West Bank.

Israel imposed a



A woman sits in the ruins of her house after it was destroyed during an Israeli assault (above). A young man waves a Palestinian flag (below)

blockade—with the support of the US, Britain and its ally Egypt—in the aftermath of that failed coup.

More than 11 years later, the siege has pushed Gaza to the brink of collapse. It has seen extreme violence against Palestinians.

The war on Gaza in 2008 was followed by two more in 2012 and 2014, both following the same pattern.

Most recently it has massacred Palestinian protesters who have gathered to protest at the border every Friday since March.

While the Arab ruling classes have largely abandoned people in Gaza, since the siege there has been increased international solidarity for the plight of the Palestinians.

In the build-up to the war in 2008, Egyptian soldiers attacked Palestinians who had demonstrated and broken out of Gaza into Egypt.

The attack led to demonstrations in Cairo that foreshadowed the Egyptian Revolution of 2011.

After the revolution, Egyptians forced their government to open the border crossing during Israel’s assault of 2012.

And in Britain assaults on Gaza have often been met with mass demonstrations.

Ordinary people have built a legacy of solidarity with Palestinians that Israel is still trying to crush.

READ MORE

● **The battle that Israel thought it would win** by Simon Assaf Available at bit.ly/IsraelBattle

● **Battle for Justice in Palestine—The Case for a Single Democratic State in Palestine** by Ali Abunimah £12.99

● **Palestine—Resistance, Revolution and the Struggle for Freedom** by Anne Alexander £3

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Are the Kippers floundering, or will racist party survive?

Leading figures are leaving Ukip over its links with Nazis. But the racist party can’t be written off yet, argues Sadie Robinson

WILL UKIP collapse after the departure of former leader Nigel Farage? Isabel Oakeshott, right wing journalist and author of The Bad Boys of Brexit, tweeted, “I think Ukip can now be declared dead.”

Farage left last week after Ukip leader Gerard Batten appointed Nazi Tommy Robinson as his “adviser” last month. Batten has embraced the far right since taking over as leader in February.

Farage said, “The party of elections is becoming a party of street activism, with our members urged to attend marches rather than taking the fight to the ballot box.

“Mr Batten’s obsession with Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (to use Tommy Robinson’s real name) and fixation with Islam makes Ukip unrecognisable to many of us.”

Farage, now a media celebrity, may fear that being associated with Robinson will harm his reputation. But there is also a longstanding argument about what strategy can help Ukip grow.

Resigned

So far former Ukip leader Paul Nuttall, David Coburn, its leader in Scotland, and MEPs Nathan Gill, William Dartmouth, Bill Etheridge and Patrick O’Flynn have all resigned over Batten’s links with Robinson.

Former deputy chair Suzanne Evans also resigned, saying Ukip was becoming a “successor to the BNP”.

None of this means that Ukip wasn’t racist before Batten took over. And Farage hasn’t always objected to hanging out with Nazis.

In 1999 the Times published a photograph of Farage meeting with British National Party members Mark Deavin and convicted bomb maker Tony Lecomber in 1997.

But in recent years Ukip has not openly organised



BATTEN DOWN the hatches?

with fascists in Britain. It has focused on Europe and immigration, not Islam. It prioritised elections, not street protests.

This model worked. In 2015 Ukip came third in the general election with 12.6 percent of the vote. Some 3.8 million people voted for it.

The vote to leave the European Union in 2016 plunged it into crisis as it was left looking for a purpose.

In the 2017 general election, Ukip won just 1.8 percent of the vote.

Farage’s departure will lead to more Ukip members leaving the party, risking further destabilisation. The party also has financial problems.

But there’s also a danger that Ukip could be reinvigorated.

In July nearly 3,200 new members joined the party—a 15 percent rise. It was the first time membership had risen since 2015. Ukip’s poll ratings also rose from 2 to 5 percent.

The gains followed Batten’s appearances at far right protests and a Tory crisis over Brexit.



Far right parties are making gains across Europe and beyond

Ukip was formed by Tories who wanted to pressure the government to oppose Europe.

Its crisis has seen supporters swing back to the Tories—but Theresa May’s disastrous handling of Brexit could see more move back.

Mike Hookem, Ukip MEP for Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire, celebrated Farage’s departure as an opportunity.

“Ukip is now free of the shackles of the past and can build for the future,” he said.

Prosper

As mainstream politicians ramp up Islamophobia, parties based on attacking Muslims can prosper. Far right parties, such as the AfD in Germany, are making gains across Europe and beyond.

The bosses’ Financial Times newspaper said Batten’s association with Robinson puts the party “beyond the pale”.

But it added, “Ukip might only be at 6 percent in opinion polls, but in the Midlands and north of England it is polling higher than the Liberal Democrats.”

Ukip is at a crossroads. Its national executive committee voted overwhelmingly against a no confidence motion in Batten this month. Yet a party statement also said it “does not endorse the appointment of Tommy Robinson”.

One member said Ukip could become “two parties in one”—those who back Batten and those who focus on Brexit.

Ukip is unstable and in crisis. But it may not be finished.

Grenfell Tower site could be highly toxic

by ALISTAIR FARROW

THE FULL scale of water and soil poisoning in the area surrounding Grenfell Tower could be revealed by an investigation in the New Year.

The Tories announced that the Environment Agency (EA) will investigate toxicity in the wake of the blaze that took place at the west London tower block in June 2017.

For Grenfell survivors and residents it's too little, too late.

Moyra Samuels from the Justice4Grenfell campaign said, "Whether it's the slow response to taking down flammable material or the pace of rehousing survivors, people have been treated appallingly."

Asbestos

Chemicals found in the surrounding area include asbestos and cyanide.

Professor Anna Stec of Uclan university raised concerns in October about toxicity in the soil up to a mile away from the tower.

She argued then that

BACK STORY

At least 72 people died as a result of the fire at Grenfell Tower in west London in June 2017

● The Tory-run council and housing bosses ignored warnings from residents and fire authorities in the run-up to the blaze

● The Tories and authorities continue to treat survivors and residents with contempt

● Chemicals such as asbestos and cyanide have been found in the surrounding area

● Cyanide is thought to have been released by the insulation that was wrapped around the tower as it burned

authorities needed to take urgent steps before her full report is released in early 2019.

Public Health England (PHE) said it would wait for her report before it took action.

Another report released by PHE on 6 December outlined



A SILENT Walk for Grenfell demands justice

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

the steps it has taken to monitor air quality since the fire.

On 14 June 2017—the night of the fire—PHE relied on existing air quality monitoring stations.

It only set up "additional monitoring for particulate matter" by 24 June and "asbestos monitoring" on

30 June. It is possible that toxic particles fell to the earth in the time between the fire and when the PHE set up additional measuring facilities days later.

One criticism aimed at Stec was that soil toxicity could be due to historic reasons, such as previous

industry on the site sampled. The EA has said it will take this into consideration when carrying out its tests.

The EA has said it will test "deeper soils, dust from inside buildings, surface water and home-grown fruit and vegetables will also be assessed".

This should have been done immediately after the fire—not 18 months later.

■ THE GRENFELL Tower inquiry last week released a confidential report into the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation (TMO).

It was initially commissioned by Tory-run Kensington and Chelsea council. It found that the TMO, which was responsible for managing Grenfell Tower, had an adequate fire and safety strategy.

The worst transgressions the report found was a "recurring theme of failure to consider fire signage".

Yet a report by the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority eight months before the fire found serious problems.

They included fire doors that did not fit properly.

And it also detailed other problems which meant smoke could spread more quickly.

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How the European Union ‘hollowed out democracy’

Costas Lapavitsas is a Marxist economist and author of a new book, *The Left Case Against the EU*. He urges a break with the neoliberal European Union

THE European Union (EU) cannot be described as anything other than a neoliberal citadel.

And it's a neoliberal citadel not because of who is in power in Spain, who is in power in Italy or who is in power in France.

It's because of logic of the thing in and of itself—and that's the most crucial point.

Neoliberalism dictates the terms, it rules the roost today.

And the reason why can be summed up very plainly—it's the single market and single currency.

It's true that these two things didn't have to go together, but they do in the EU and together they make for neoliberal domination.

So those in Britain who wish to remain in the single market should know what they are wishing for.

They want this country to be permanently in an arrangement that will give the upper hand to neoliberal policies and measures.

Why did this arise?

The Maastricht Treaty of 1991, the path that led to it, and everything that flowed from it ushered in a period of dramatic transformation of the EU.

Logic

The logic that allowed that to happen is the four freedoms that are so heavily touted—the free movement of capital, labour, goods and services.

If you look at these freedoms in the abstract, they can be a reasonable framework for interstate relations.

The point is that in the EU they are interpreted as individual rights within the Maastricht Treaty framework.

Everything is an individual right,

over collective rights and policies. The European Court of Justice decides which way the law will come down.

So the single market, the single currency and four freedoms are a solid, rigid framework for neoliberalism.

That is supported by a whole range of other institutions—very powerful institutions, typically unaccountable institutions that work in bizarre ways.

And to top it off, there is a dominant ideology of neoliberalism throughout.

Because of what the EU has become, there is a vast democratic deficit. Economic policy has become depoliticised.

So the Italians elect a very right wing government with Matteo Salvini and they have a certain policy.

Before that the Greeks elected Alexis Tsipras and his Syriza outfit and they had a policy.

They are very different policies. But what's the bottom line?

Both of them have to pursue the same policies.

And now Tsipras gives advice to Salvini about how to face up to the EU and tells him that he has to compromise.

What's the point of elections then? Why vote in one country or another country?

Economic policy is the realm of experts who populate universities and think tanks, not something for ordinary people.

They call it “realism”—I call it a hollowing out of democracy and the loss of popular sovereignty.

This article is based on a speech made by Costas Lapavitsas in London last week to launch his new book, *The Left Case Against the EU*



MEPS VOTING in the European Parliament (above)—but democracy in the European Union is limited. The real winners are bosses in Germany, led, for now, by Chancellor Angela Merkel (left)

PICTURES: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT/FICKR

Reform is a utopian dream

REFORMING THE European Union (EU) is a long-standing dream of the left.

I remember well in the 1970s, the Eurocommunist left emerged and was very adamant and hopeful that the EU be the agent to transform Europe.

They said that it would be the field of struggle of working people and how socialism would come about.

Forty years on they are still trying.

Yet in the meantime the EU has become much worse in terms of neoliberalism.

The EU is “reforming” itself all of the time—



Marxist author Costas Lapavitsas

in the wrong direction. The remain and reform position comes from a good place, but it is a utopian dream.

For me the left must recapture its radicalism—it must put across the argument for rupture and break.

The European left became a force by challenging the institutions of European capital.

The left should now challenge those intuitions, offer a break with those institutions and offer another future for working people and the poor of the EU.

Contradictions in the union

THE EUROPEAN Union (EU) is full of contradictions and is in a political, economic and social crisis.

It is presented as a project where there will be convergence between richer and poorer states.

In reality there is increasing divergence across Europe.

The EU has got a core and within it there is one hegemonic power—Germany. Or, to be more specific, German industrial exporting capital.

Alongside the core you have many peripheries. There is the periphery of the south—Greece, Spain, Portugal which are not able to compete.

There is the periphery of central Europe, which is still attached to the German industrial structure.

The Baltic states are different again. Germany is the winner. But it's not true that the German people have won.

The winners of the process, German industrial exporting capital, began with the Maastricht Treaty. There are now some very rich people in Germany. But how did they bring it about?

It wasn't through investment and technology. They kept wages down and created poor conditions for the majority of people. They were able to do that because of the single market and single currency.

A hostile place for migrants

THE European Union (EU) is a place that is hostile to outsiders.

If you think that the EU is the place to go for solutions to racism and welcoming migrants, you haven't thought about it carefully enough.

If you've got the “wrong” skin colour and you're a refugee or a migrant coming into the EU, then you've got problems.

Camps have been created across the periphery of the EU.

Policy

This isn't the right wing Hungarian government doing it—this is the policy of the EU.

The EU has also militarised the problem of the refugees.

Just look at what's happened in the Mediterranean or Aegean in the last couple of years as the wave of refugees emerged from Syria.

The problem was presented as a threat. Navies were mobilised, military forces were mobilised.

And the outcome was that the Mediterranean Sea was turned into a grave for thousands of people.



The Left Case Against the EU

by Costas Lapavitsas

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Read more...

●The EU stands for the few, not the many
bit.ly/EUfew

●Damning report exposes depth of racism in EU
bit.ly/EUracism

IN BRIEF

Brum bins to reject council's rubbish

A STRIKE ballot for bin workers in Birmingham was set to close on Thursday of this week.

The dispute is about the treatment of workers following strikes at the Labour-run council last year.

Unite union members are fighting over alleged "secret payments" to GMB union members—who didn't strike.

Cleaners fight over pay at Luton airport

CLEANERS AT Luton Airport staged a seven-day strike for a pay rate of £9 an hour last week.

The Unite union members work for outsourcer Sasse, which pays them just £7.83 an hour.

Passenger assistants—outsourced to Clece Care Services—were due to walk out with them.

But Unite suspended their strike so they could vote on a new offer.

Fight for pay rise at local newspapers

JOURNALISTS WORKING for regional papers in Carlisle, Whitehaven and Workington were set to strike on Thursday 20 December over poor pay.

The NUJ union members say bosses at publisher Newsquest have not given them a rise since 2015 and have only paid them two rises in the past 11 years.

Union suspends strike at Shelter

THE UNITE union suspended a planned strike at housing charity Shelter following a last minute offer.

Over 400 Unite members were due to stage a three-day walkout from Tuesday of this week.

Workers wanted an increase of 3.5 percent or a flat rate increase of £1,100 for everyone. But instead they voted to accept an offer of a 2.25 percent raise, and a lump sum of about £500.

Coordinated fight at ministries

WORKERS AT the Ministry of Justice plan to strike for three days in January.

The security guards and receptionists will walk out after they voted by 100 percent for strikes on a 100 percent turnout.

This section of workers joins cleaners who already have a live ballot.

The UVW union members' demands include the London Living Wage of £10.55, occupational sick pay and equal annual leave as direct employees of the department.

Strikes are set to be coordinated with PCS union members at the department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

ANTI-RACISM

Unity in West Yorkshire

LABOUR SHADOW home secretary Diane Abbott gave a big boost to a rally against racism in Batley, West Yorkshire, last Saturday.

Around 80 people attended the rally organised by Kirklees Stand Up To Racism (SUTR).

The local newspaper, The Press, published a vicious attack on Labour councillor and Momentum supporter Fazila Loonat.

Columnist Danny Lockwood attacked her as "a

leading member of an anti-British, communist group that is riddled with antisemitic racists".

A flood of hate mail and malicious phone calls to her followed.

This is the town where a Nazi assassinated the late Batley and Spen Labour MP Jo Cox in 2016.

The murder came six months after a nearby march by Nazi Britain First.

Roger Keely, Kirklees SUTR co-secretary



DIANE ABBOTT joined the anti-racist rally in Batley, West Yorkshire

PICTURE: NEIL TERRY

CAMMELL LAIRD

Don't trust shipyard bosses to save jobs

THE UNITE and GMB unions suspended a programme of rolling walkouts at Cammell Laird shipyard after bosses agreed to delay job cuts.

The workers at the shipyard in Birkenhead, Merseyside, are fighting against bosses' plans to slash 40 percent of the workforce by March.

Bosses had planned to issue 291 notices last week.

They had thrown out the unions' proposals for a "peace plan" in return for suspending the industrial action last week.

Unite and GMB announced in response that they were escalating their rolling walkouts into January.

The industrial action saw a different section of the workforce strike each day and the whole shipyard observe an overtime ban.

Bosses agreed to a "peace plan" after the escalation, showing that they respond best to the power of strikes.

While the immediate threat



Solidarity on the picket line

of jobs cuts before Christmas has been lifted, what happens in the longer term remains up in the air.

The suspension of strikes and job cuts is designed to allow for a taskforce to find a long-term solution. This would include the unions, the government, Cammell Laird bosses and the landowners Peel Port Investments.

It said, "The agreement recognises the need for the yard to remain competitive

in bidding for new and future work and all parties agree to work together to ensure this remains the case."

Workers should not have to accept any pay restraint, worse terms and conditions or productivity deals in order to save their jobs.

They raised that there was a "hidden agenda" to bring in full blown casualisation, with a workforce made up almost entirely of agency workers.

Cammell Laird is a profitable company with an overpaid CEO, John Syvret.

Its accounts noted that "the highest paid director received emoluments of £255,000 for the year ended 31 March 2017".

Bosses will attempt to use the pause to dampen the fighting mood and regain the upper hand.

Unions must be prepared to take to the picket lines again unless bosses agree not to push through the jobs cuts.

HOUSING

Housing campaigners vow to take on Tories' attacks

UP TO 200 people joined the Homes for All annual housing summit in London last Saturday.

Eileen Short from the Homes for All campaign opened the summit. She said, "This is about drawing all the different local campaigns together."

"We need to unite and mount a challenge to the Tories' direction of travel."

Speakers included NEU education union joint general secretary Kevin Courtney and Emma Dent Coad, Labour MP for North Kensington.

Her constituency in west London includes the site of Grenfell Tower.

Dent-Coad said, "Grenfell was not an accident, it was preventable and the dangers were known. It's our job to keep it in the headlines."

Steve Turner from

the Unite union sent a message of solidarity to the conference.

"Only with the election of a radical Labour government under Jeremy Corbyn will we see the end to the housing crisis" he said.

But the overriding message from people at the conference was not to trust anyone else to fight on their behalf

In one session Julie Phipps from Southwark in south London argued that the Labour council there had "undermined" tenants' organisations.

And she argued that on a national level "Labour's housing policy is not strong enough".

"They are talking about 'intermediate rents'. We want one council—one rent," she said.

TRANSPORT ROUND-UP

Strikes for safety on trains

AROUND 650 bus drivers in County Durham were set to start a seven-day strike for higher pay this Sunday.

The Unite union members voted by 95 percent to strike for a £1 an hour pay rise.

The action is set to affect services in Durham, Darlington, Redcar, Stockton and Whitby.

Unite regional officer Bob Bolam said the union had discussed speeding up the pay increments of drivers so they reach the top of their pay band quicker.

Arriva bosses should give workers a proper pay rise, not just adjust the pay bands.

■NORTHERN RAIL guards aren't backing down from their programme of strikes for safety.

The RMT union members walked out against the imposition of driver only operation (DOO) on Saturday of last week.

DOO trains threaten their jobs and make train travel unsafe and inaccessible.

Northern workers were set to strike again on Saturday and on every Saturday for the rest of the year.

Train guards on South Western Railway plan to join Northern Rail workers on strike on 22 December.

SOCIAL CARE

Takeover of Allied Health

ALLIED HEALTHCARE, a huge social care provider on the edge of bankruptcy, has been bought by Health Care Resourcing Group.

Bosses announced they would end their contracts with around 150 councils in mid-December.

It threw the future of 13,500 vulnerable people into chaos as councils had to look at alternative care providers.

But now Allied is keen to retain its existing contracts for the new owners.

All social care should be publicly provided so service users have secure, long-term care.



Pat Boyle

OBITUARY

Pat Boyle 1942-2018

PAT, WHO died recently, was an ever-present member of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in west London and at national events.

Pat was born in Ireland during the Second World War. He came to London and then became part of the fight against the British state's internment and occupation in Northern Ireland.

He joined the International Socialists, the forerunner of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), in 1969.

He was a hugely enthusiastic supporter of migrant workers and trade union organisation, particularly in the restaurant

and hospitality sector. Pat was eternally optimistic about workers' struggle and was thinking of new schemes to outwit the bosses.

And he was always determined to recruit new people to the SWP and to look forward to the demise of capitalism.

He will be missed by us all.

EDUCATION

The battle to defeat academy continues

by SADIE ROBINSON

THERE WAS a festive mood on the picket line at The John Roan School on Tuesday as workers began a three-day strike.

GMB union members wearing Santa hats and playing Christmas songs were joined by NEU union members who refused to cross their picket line.

The workers are fighting against a plan to turn the Greenwich school into an academy.

Teaching assistant Matilda told Socialist Worker, "I'm mostly worried about the students. We've got a great group of support staff in the school now, and that's especially important for children with special educational needs.

"But with academies it's all about grades and not about the wellbeing of the children."

Strikers are furious that the plan for the school to be run by the UST academy chain has already seen money leached from the school.

Campaigners say £551,000 was spent on "consultancy" at John Roan last year. And £438,000 has been earmarked for "consultancy" this year.

Cleaning supervisor Tammy told Socialist



JOHN ROAN strikers and supporters

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

Worker, "The amount of money wasted is unbelievable. They've taken all the money before they've even started."

Cleaner Margaret told Socialist Worker, "The academy will just see all the money go out of the school."

Workers have already been threatened with cuts.

Matilda said, "They

sent us an email saying they're looking at cuts. And you know it's not going to be cuts at higher levels. We're understaffed as it is."

NEU member Lorraine told Socialist Worker, "I've got to support the GMB strike. I'm against privatisation."

"You can't put a price on children's lives or education. It's immoral."

NEU union national officers



A confident striker

are backing the campaign, but official NEU financial support for their solidarity action isn't legally possible.

To keep the solidarity going, the parent campaign group is asking for contributions.

Workers will need to ramp up their action, and keep working with parents, in order to win.

●Solidarity messages to Steve. oakes@royalgreenwich.gov.uk and Greenwichnut@outlook.com

●Donate at bit.ly/JohnRoanStrikeSupport Longer at bit.ly/JRstrike111218

ROYAL MAIL

Bristol ready for fightback

ROYAL MAIL workers at the South East delivery office in Bristol have voted to strike in defence of a sacked colleague.

Members of the CWU union voted by 86 percent for strikes for justice for delivery worker Barry Barker. Bosses sacked Barry for a "breach of business standards".

The CWU said managers never explained what this standard was. Managers have since reinstated Barry, but insisted on imposing a disciplinary penalty on him and transferred him to a different office.

CWU Bristol branch secretary Rob Wotherspoon said, "While we're pleased

to win his re-instatement, the workforce here rejects the idea that Barry should be forced out of the office," said Rob.

The vote comes amid growing resentment at pressure from managers, which has sparked a wave of unofficial walkouts.

■POSTAL WORKERS on the Isle of Man were set to strike on Thursday 13 and Friday 14 of December over plans to cut pensions and pay.

CWU members in Britain, who have faced similar attacks, should refuse to handle mail being sent to or from the Isle of Man.

UNISON UNION

Defend Karen Reissmann

SUPPORTERS OF leading health worker Karen Reissmann lobbied the Unison union's national executive committee last week.

Unison members are demanding that Karen is reinstated to her democratically elected union positions.

She was a leading critic of the recent NHS pay deal that was misold by the leaderships of 13 health unions.

A Unison member from London told the lobby, "People have been asking, 'Where is Karen? Why isn't she at meetings where she should be at?'"

"We now know she's suspended—and being thinking people we're putting two and two together."

"A couple of months ago there was a massive row about the NHS pay deal, which the unions said was fantastic for people."

"When people got their pay packets, they realised that what they'd been told was in the deal was not there at all."

"In our union Karen made some criticisms and shortly afterwards it appears that Karen was suspended."

A statement initiated by Unison members now has over 500 signatories in Karen's defence

The Unison member from London said, "You can't have a trade union where you don't have the right to criticise the leadership."

"It's as if Joseph Stalin was resurrected and is walking through those front doors."

Activists should get people to sign the solidarity statement to demand Karen's reinstatement and democracy in Unison.

●Sign the statement at bit.ly/ReinstateKarenReissmann and go to Facebook page Reinstate Karen Reissmann

BARCLAY SCHOOL

WORKERS AT The Barclay School in Stevenage were set to strike on Wednesday. The walkout by NEU union members is against a planned forced academisation of the school.

Some 96 percent of NEU members who voted backed strikes in a ballot. And parents are opposing academisation too.

Over 1,300 people have signed a petition against the academy plan. Parents planned to hand in the petition to Downing Street this week.

Schools inspectorate Ofsted rated the school inadequate in 2016.

It was placed in special measures then put under an academy order by the Department for Education. It is now rated as requiring improvement with elements of good.

The NEU and parents are calling for a public

consultation and a ballot of on the plan.

Peter Hawkins from parents' campaign group Hands off Barclay said parents "wholeheartedly support the proposed strike to safeguard the future of the school".

School NEU rep Jill Borchers said workers are "proud" of the improvements at the school but now faced "a period of great uncertainty".

Paul McLaughlin, eastern regional NEU secretary, said, "The academy trusts are non-accountable private bodies that can employ unqualified teachers and pay excessive executive salaries."

"We are forced to take action to defend the school from a hostile takeover."

●Send messages of support to NEU rep Jill Borchers at jeborchers@hotmail.com and go to Hands off Barclay on Facebook for details

ROUND-UP

■BOSSES HAVE offered college workers a pay "rise" of 1 percent. The derisory offer comes after a successful 48-hour strike by UCU union members at six colleges last month.

Bigger college strikes loom in the New Year. The UCU is balloting members across 26 colleges for strikes over pay.

The ballots end on 19 December. And the Unison union has said it will ballot its members in colleges in England in January.

■SOME 32 members of the Socialist Teachers Alliance have been elected to the NEU union's national executive committee.

The executive has 72 members. Ten of the 32 STA members elected are Socialist Worker supporters. These are Debs Gwynn, Chris Denson, Sheena Wheatley, Sally Kincaid, Simon Murch, Jean Evanson, John Reddiford, Warren Chambers, Stefan Simms and Jess Edwards.

CIVIL SERVICE

BEEFEATERS AT the Tower of London could strike, say the PCS and GMB unions.

Workers, including Beefeaters, at sites such as the Tower of London, Kensington Palace and Hampton Court Palace are fighting attacks on their pensions.

Bosses at Historic Royal Palaces—which manages six unoccupied royal palaces—want to close their current pension scheme and replace it with a worse one.

Some 91 percent of PCS members voted on a 72 percent for strikes. The PCS should announce strike dates.

■SOCIALIST Worker supporters in the PCS union are calling for another election to decide which candidate for assistant general secretary the Left Unity grouping should back.

It comes after Janice Godrich, backed by Socialist Worker supporters, won the previous election but stood down due to illness.

CONSTRUCTION

The threat of Besna Mark 2

CONSTRUCTION bosses are looking to tear up the electricians' national agreement—again.

A document from the employers' Electrical Contractors Association, seen by Socialist Worker, "Employment relations modernisation," calls for the introduction of a new installer grade of electrician.

Under the guise of "harmonised terms and conditions" the bosses are looking to limit employment rights under the national agreement.

They want "more efficient utilisation of working hours" such as flexible scheduling of refreshment breaks.

The proposals say bosses will try to get their own side together but that "support is unlikely to prove sustainable unless Unite the Union is too

able to demonstrate its own commitment to contemplate genuine modernisation".

While some at the union's top officials are far too open to the idea, the proposal has been rejected at a number of union meetings.

Some 100 workers met at a Scottish Rank and File meeting last weekend and unanimously rejected the new plan.

In 2012 rank and file electricians beat a similar proposal called Besna after six months of protests, occupations and unofficial strikes.

If the bosses decide to make the same mistake as before and attempt to impose the new grade to break up the national agreement then the same level of resistance will be needed again.

●A copy of the bosses' plan is available at bit.ly/BesnaMk2



THE MARCH brought together thousands from anti-racist groups, trade unions, socialists, women's organisations and the Labour Party

PICTURES: GUY SMALLMAN

10,000 OPPOSE NAZI ROBINSON

OVER 10,000 people protested against Nazi Tommy Robinson in central London on Sunday.

The anti-racist march easily outnumbered Robinson's "Brexit betrayal" march. It was a big step forward from previous occasions when Robinson's forces have been bigger than the opposition.

The unity of Robinson's fascists and the racists of Ukip was smaller than the unity of anti-fascists.

But with the Tories in crisis over Brexit, the far right will try to grow further.

Trade unionists, students, anti-fascists, socialists, women's groups, Labour members, anarchists and others joined the counter-protest. It brought together Stand Up To Racism (SUTR), Unite Against Fascism, Momentum, Stop Trump and other groups.

Labour member Adam said he was there because "we need to defeat fascism".

"All over Europe, right wing parties are getting elected," he told Socialist Worker.

"There needs to be an alternative left wing party."

"But even media such as the Guardian attack Jeremy

Corbyn because he speaks the truth and is for working people."

Protesters chanted, "Black and white, unite and fight," and, "Any time, any place—punch a Nazi in the face," as they marched down Regent Street from Portland Place.

Mark, a Momentum activist from Tower Hamlets said, "It's important to have unity against the far right and stop them taking advantage of the various crises across Europe and the collapse of neoliberalism."

Fascism

Asif Khan from Watford Labour Party told Socialist Worker, "We need to show that, irrespective of whether you're pro or anti-EU, fascism isn't the answer."

"Stephen Yaxley-Lennon [Robinson] is just an opportunist thug. We need to show that the vast majority of people don't support his politics."

"And we also need to show that we can deliver social justice through politics. We've got to give people hope."

London Assembly member Unmesh Desai added, "We



On the racist 'Great Brexit Betrayal' march

With the Tories in crisis over Brexit, the far right will try to grow further

are against attempts to divide us. People have genuine fears about Brexit so let's have a proper Brexit debate. Don't let the right take it over—Tommy Robinson is not the solution."

At a rally in Whitehall Nahella Ashraf from SUTR said, "Today is about unity against the fascists and the Nazis."

And Weyman Bennett from SUTR hailed the turnout on the anti-fascist protest.

"We are the many and they are the few," he said.

Referring back to the fight against the British National Party, he said, "We broke Nick Griffin—we smashed the Nazis on the streets."

Weyman said Theresa May's "hostile environment" for migrants has "opened the door to these scumbags".

"We face dangerous times and we have to organise," he said. "Many of us have come together and we have to carry on doing that."

Claudia Webbe from Labour's national executive committee brought "solidarity greetings from Jeremy Corbyn".

"When Labour gets into government we will not stop marching with you," she said.

Joint general secretary of the NEU union Kevin Courtney said, "There are more of us than them today."

"In this country there is an anti-racist majority. Every time Tommy Robinson is on the streets we have to mobilise."

Nita Sanghera, vice president of the UCU union, said, "We will be here again and again" to oppose the Nazis.

Ukip covered in Nazi scum

UKIP LEADER Gerard Batten shared a stage with Nazi Tommy Robinson on Sunday as their "Brexit Means Exit" march brought 5,000 people onto the streets.

Speakers there talked of being "swamped" by Muslims and described Islam as "poison".

Crisis-ridden Ukip is trying to realign itself with the far right street movement but still contest elections.

"I want Ukip to organise in every constituency and take votes away from the treacherous political class," Batten said.

And Robinson asked the crowd to join him in becoming a member of Ukip. But if Batten's intention was to reach wider layers he was unsuccessful—the turnout was smaller than Robinson has achieved on his own.